

Planning Statement

October 2019

Property name	Hamilton Centre
Property address	135 Bulmershe Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5SG
Proposed Works	A replacement of accommodation for Phoenix College SEMH consisting of

Refurbishment of Existing Hamilton Road Centre

To provide general and specialist teaching accommodation, ancillary and support spaces including recladding, re-roofing and re-glazing of existing building.

New Build Hall Block

The construction of a single-storey block comprising main entrance, dining room, kitchen and changing rooms and a double height sports / assembly hall.

Associated hard and soft landscaping

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Appendices

1.0 Existing Buildings and Site

1.1 Site and Site Access

The Hamilton Centre is situated on the southern boundary of Alfred Sutton Playing Fields, east of the main town centre, close to University of Reading. The playing fields are bounded by the annex to Maiden Erlegh Secondary school, University Technology College and Alfred Sutton Primary School along the western boundary, by the busy Wokingham Road to the north, the residential development off Regis Park Road to the east and residential streets of Bulmershe and Hamilton Rd to the South. Other significant buildings adjacent to the development are Lakeside Care Home, Loddon House student accommodation (University of Reading) and Parkside Doctors Surgery.

The existing site entrance is from Bulmershe Road, close to the junction with Hamilton Road. Pedestrian and vehicular access leads to a car park shared with the staff of Maiden Erlegh School. The site access and carpark is at the upper level of a steep bank with the Hamilton Centre itself built at the bottom of the bank to the extent that fire access from the first floor is currently provided by a bridge.

(Please refer to Appendix A - Existing site plan). The site benefits from generous playing fields which are shared with Maiden Erlegh, University Technology College and Alfred Sutton Primary School

There are no public footpaths or rights of way within the site or the larger site area of the playing fields.

The marginal land at the edge of the playing field to the east of the site is liable to occasional flooding but the proposed development is not within a flood risk area.

There are no conservation areas or buildings of historic interest in the vicinity of the proposed development.

1.2 Community Use

The existing building is currently unoccupied but local youth football clubs use the playing fields for training at the weekend.

1.3 Site Boundary

A 1.8m high chain link fence runs along the southern boundary with Lakeside Care Home and also along the boundary between Bulmershe Road and the shared car park of Maiden Erlegh School.

1.4 Landscape Features

The site is steeply banked from the higher level at Bulmershe Road, down to the lower level of the playing field. There is also a gentle fall across the playing fields themselves from west to east. The pitches are often waterlogged with vegetation confined to the site boundaries. Mature trees along the boundary are marked on the topographical survey but a specific tree survey has not been provided as the development does not impact in anyway upon any of the surrounding mature trees.

1.5 Existing Building Design and Use

The Hamilton Centre was constructed in the 1970s and is a flat roofed, concrete framed construction clad in orange brick. Existing windows are single glazed steel Crittal and has little architectural merit both internally and externally. The building was initially used as a 6th form for approximately 300 pupils which closed in the 1980s. Most recently, it was let as office space by Reading Borough Council to a number of institutions including Thames Valley University and WEA. Part of the ground floor was converted into a Surestart Children's centre in 2010.

2.0 Project Development and Design Brief

2.1 Priority Schools Building Programme Bid

The project originated from an ESFA (Education Skills Funding Agency) PSBP2 bid for Reading Borough Council commenced in 2017

Phoenix College is a specialist education unit for 64 pupils with SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) issues, age range 11 – 18. The unit currently occupies a small site off Christchurch Rd, a residential area to the south of Reading town centre. The College's existing accommodation comprises a converted Victorian town house which has been extended twice plus two modular single storey units to the rear.

A feasibility study undertaken for the ESFA in November 2017 concluded that the existing site would not be able to meet basic design and space standards required by the ESFA's output specification. The accommodation falls short of the space standards for a school of this size and type by over 50%. Furthermore, the quality and nature of the provision is very unsuited to the needs of a special school with a lack of sanitary facilities meaning that the College can only accept male pupils, despite there being local demand for female pupil places.

The ESFA (now DfE) and RBC agreed that the site and accommodation were unsuitable for development both in terms of meeting basic need and representing value for money. Agreement was reached to allow Reading Borough Council as the Responsible Body to develop another more suitable site using a funding contribution from the DfE. A site options appraisal was completed in April 2018 to assess the suitability of 8 possible alternative sites, concluding that Hamilton Road was the most viable. This was followed by a feasibility study to establish the funding contribution which has now been agreed as part of the Outline Business Case signed by the DfE in May of this year.

2.2 Finalised Project Brief:

SEMH is a very challenging sector providing education and care for some of the most vulnerable young people in society. All pupils on role are statemented and most have been permanently excluded from mainstream or other SEN schools. Pupils display a range of behaviours and can often become aggressive, taking out their frustrations on both staff and the fabric of the building they inhabit. This demands a high level of robustness from both fittings, fixtures and building fabric in general. A good example of this is the need to limit glazing below 900mm to avoid repeated breakages. Safeguarding is paramount in SEMH, much more so than in mainstream education. Both design and construction need to respond to this to ensure that pupils can be protected from one another and reduce opportunities for self harm. Some pupils feel the need to 'run' to escape from what they perceive as a confined situation, so this also needs to be accommodated. Pupils needs have become more complex in recent years and the school is now required to provide for a wider range of needs including A-typical Autism and In-obstructive Aspergers.

The project brief was developed from a schedule of accommodation provided by the DfE for a school of this type and then refined through a programme of consultation with both Phoenix College and Reading Borough Council and other SEMH facilities.

2.3 Proposed Site Strategy

Environmental and cost considerations led to the decision to retain and refurbish the existing building. Extending the building along the same orientation provided the most efficient use of the site. The structural grid and proportions of the existing building lent towards housing classroom and teaching accommodation, leaving the extension to provide the larger volume spaces of hall, dining and kitchen.

The building provides privacy to external play area which runs parallel to the eastern façade but also incorporates a triangular area of the playing fields bordering Lakeside Care Home and the housing development off Regis Park Road. The far eastern end of the site will become an orchard / wildlife area creating a buffer zone between the school and its closest neighbours.

An area of land currently leased to Maiden Erlegh school will need to be absorbed into the site to accommodate the additional staff car parking required for the new facility. Details of the parking strategy can be found in the Transport Statement in **Appendix E**

2.4 Land Ownership and Public Open Space

The project requires a land transfer from University Technology College to Reading Borough Council to incorporate the triangular area of marginal land at the edge of the school playing field and a strip of land directly adjacent to the existing Hamilton Centre building.

The area known as Crescent Road Playing Fields is to be designated as Local Green Space under RBC's new Local Plan. The proposed development requires the re-designation of the triangular area beyond the diagonal footpath and small strip of playing field next to the existing Hamilton Centre from 'Local Green Space', to 'Educational Use'. This area which is also subject to a legal agreement. The land is required to provide the new College with sufficient external /recreational space in line with national guidance. The area will be a mix of planting, grass and hard-play as shown on the proposed site plan ref E03700-L-7000 Proposed Main Site Area General Arrangement.

The land is viewed as marginal, is not and has never been used for pitches and has limited use for recreation. The loss of this area to Educational Use is mitigated by the following:

- Provision of an artificial turf pitch (ATP) on the site of overgrown and dilapidated tennis courts. The new facility will be fenced and will be managed in partnership by the Crescent Road Joint Management Committee. There is a proven demand for this facility from the existing educational institutions on Crescent Road and it is envisaged that Phoenix College would also make use of the facility. Community lettings will also be made available outside of school hours. It is hoped that this will provide both local schools and community with more flexible all year round use.
- Works to improve the drainage of the playing field are included within the project to reduce waterlogged areas during winter months and thereby extend use for both local schools and community.
- Male and Female changing rooms with w.c. facilities are being provided adjacent to the car-park within the new extension block. The changing rooms will be only accessible to Phoenix College during the school day but by means of a second set of doors, can be accessed by the public / community football groups at the weekend without having to open up the whole College. There are currently no facilities provided for community users of the playing field at weekends.
- The land to be transferred has been assessed as being of low ecological value; whilst the area will be enclosed, it is to be landscaped and planted with native species, including an orchard which will provide a haven for local wildlife, improving bio diversity.

In summary, the applicant believes the transfer of land into educational use is justified in terms of social value (providing much needed educational facility for some of the most vulnerable young people of Reading), and as sustainable development; breathing new life into a redundant building that in its present state is a magnet for antisocial behaviour. The loss of Local Green Space is balanced by both these concerns and by the proposals highlighted as mitigation above.

2.4.1 Loss of Playing Field

A smaller area of land that forms part of the transfer described in 2.4.1 will also be subject to a Section 77 approval under the Protection of Playing Fields Act. This application will be run in parallel to the planning application but the case for mitigation is identical to those described under section 2.4. above. The pitch layouts will remain unchanged and the proposed site plan E03700-L-7103 Proposed Sports Pitch Layout indicates how these are laid out to comply with Sport England guidance which includes provision of 'run off' around the perimeter of each pitch.

2.5 Context and Scale

The new building assumes similar proportions to the existing building in both plan and section (the new block is 2.5m higher than the existing. The visual impact of the extension is mitigated by its location at the base of the bank, its scale and proportion in keeping with both the recent 2 storey development at Maiden Erlegh and the buildings of University Technology College.

2.6 Proposed Building Form and Layout

The hall block is composed of two rectangular forms; a larger 9m high volume for the hall and a lower single storey volume accommodating main entrance, dining hall, kitchen and changing rooms. The changing rooms are adjacent to the car park to afford direct access for community football clubs using the playing field at the weekend. The main teaching spaces are located on the east side of the refurbished building with the larger specialist spaces located at the far end. Corridors have been designed to be as wide as possible to give the building a non -institutional feel.

2.7 Materials

External building envelope materials are as follows:

- Face brickwork to match existing.
- Face brickwork to complement existing brickwork
- 3 layer felt flat roof: colour matt grey.
- Polyester powder coated aluminium framed glazing and doors: colour dark grey.
- Aluzinc metal cladding forming entrance canopy

The final choice of vertical cladding material will be dependent upon tender costs and may need to be reviewed prior to construction.

3.0 Sustainability

3.1 General Principles

The design is very sustainable as it retains the concrete frame and deck of the existing building, significantly reducing the level of embodied carbon emissions that would have been associated with a complete demolition and new build. The hall block is constructed from cross laminate timber which means the construction has a very low carbon footprint. Replacement and upgrade of the building fabric will greatly improve thermal performance and heat loss whilst a reduction in the overall area of glazing will help to reduce solar heat gains and overheating, especially on the first floor.

3.2 Benefits of Cross Laminate Timber CLT

CLT provides better thermal performance, a medium mass material performs considerably better than lightweight steel with lightweight infill; makes the design more resistant to future climate change and building overheating. CLT is much easier to design and detail than steel frame construction; it reduces thermal bridging, allows continuity of insulation and compliance with air tightness is much easier; the panels themselves are inherently air tight meaning that air tightness is reliant on the taping of joints between panels rather than use of air tight membranes which often get damaged during construction. CLT has excellent sustainability standards : low embodied carbon during production compared with steel with the timber being sourced from sustainable forests. It is recyclable at the end of its life (wood pellets) and during its life span, the building acts as a carbon sink making it a **net carbon positive** building material.

3.3 Thermal Mass, ventilation and Climate Change adaptation

The classrooms are ventilated using NVHR (natural ventilation heat recovery) units which improve internal air quality whilst significantly reducing space heating requirements, again reducing the carbon footprint. Combined with the introduction of additional thermal mass in the form of wood-fibre insulation, this will make the building resilient to summer overheating associated with future climate change. Roof lights and opening windows also allow for traditional natural ventilation if required. Rainwater outlets have been oversized to cope with increased rainfall.

3.4 Renewable Energy

The existing photovoltaic array on the roof of the existing building is to be demounted and then refitted as part of the project, extending its design life and allowing the College to benefit from reduced energy bills.

3.5 Whole Life Costing

A whole life costing exercise has also been completed to provide the client with an understanding of their maintenance liabilities over the life time of the asset. Consideration has also been given to the long term development of the site. There is a national and local increase in demand for both Special Needs and SEMH provision. Although the unit covered by this application is for a 64 place unit, critical elements (hall, kitchen and car parking) have been designed to accommodate future growth making the design ready to cope with expansion if required.

3.6 BREEAM and Energy Performance Targets

It is proposed that BREEAM accreditation is not sought for this project but that an alternative approach is used to show how the design complies with subject headings under the BREEAM accreditation system. This is covered under the Sustainability Statement included within **Appendix D (This is to follow as an addendum)**

The brief for this building requires an **in-use** Display Energy Certificate (DEC) of 120kg/CO₂/m²/yr which is offered as a more robust performance target than that demanded currently by BREEAM which is based upon theoretical performance rather than actual energy consumed. Post occupancy studies of many new build and refurbishment projects demonstrate a performance gap between design intent and actual energy consumed of between 2 – 3 times worse. To achieve this target and avoid the performance gap, the project is adopting the RIBA's '**Plan for Use**' / **Soft Landings** process which aims to improve both building performance and user comfort after handover.

4 Proposed Landscaping and External Works

Landscaping work is focused in three areas;

- Hard landscaping to improve pedestrian approach, parking drop off and staff carparking to the front of the site.
- Hard and soft landscaping to provide a safe and secure environment for outdoor teaching and recreation.
- Re-surfacing existing tennis courts to form a Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) for use by Phoenix College, Alfred Sutton Primary, University Technology College and Maiden Erlegh Secondary School

4.1 Improved Playing Field Access

The additional staff car park will provide easier access to the playing field for use by community football clubs who use the facility at the weekend. The new extension provides 2 changing rooms with toilets with access directly off the car park, specifically for community use. The junior football clubs who use the field clubs currently have no access to either changing facilities or toilets. A tarmac path will also connect the proposed ATP on the site of the tennis courts with Alfred Sutton Primary School and the University Technology College.

4.2 Sport England Consultation

A pre-application consultation is ongoing. Initial SE response asked for applicant to consider increasing the size of the ATP and providing floodlighting to this facility. The request to increase the size has been considered but rejected on grounds that a larger pitch cannot be accommodated in the tennis court area due to site levels and boundary restrictions, relocation of the ATP elsewhere on the playing fields would impact detrimentally on community use which is predominantly the weekend football clubs. Maiden Erlegh, UTC and Alfred Sutton Primary have all confirmed they would be able to make use of the pitch at its proposed size. Discussions are ongoing regarding the detail of these proposals.

4.3 Construction access

Construction access will use the main vehicular entrance from Bulmershe Road. A detailed site compound plan and method statement will be developed with the main contractor once appointed.

4.4 Tree removal and protection

There are no category A or B trees within the development site. 4no. category C (non-mature) trees on the existing bank adjacent to the proposed main entrance and around ATP may have to be removed but it is intended to retain these with suitable root protection if possible. It is not intended to submit a tree survey as part of this application.

4.5 Site levels and accessibility

Although the school's intake will be primarily ambulant pupils, the landscape around the buildings will facilitate level access. The change in level from the car park / drop off is negotiated by an accessible ramp and two accessible parking bays are provided in the new car park. Further details regards to accessibility can be found in the Design and Access statement included with **Appendix B**

4.6 Planting design

A planting design will be developed through consultation with the school who have highlighted the importance of the natural environment for learning and therapy. Focus will be given to native species but also improvement of biodiversity through features like bug hotels and wildlife ponds.

4.7 College Boundary Treatment

To ensure sufficient safeguarding, a 3m high fence is proposed around the perimeter of the school site to provide a clear delineation between external teaching areas and public realm (car park, main entrance approach). The fencing type is likely to be a green weldmesh type and will be back planted with hedging and trees to reduce the visual impact from the playing field and to provide a degree of privacy to pupils.

5 Consultations

5.1 Planning Policy Guidance and Other Relevant Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2018.

New Local Plan Policy ER1F & EN7 Local Green Space and Public Open Space.

Education Skills Funding Agency / Department for Education - Output Specification November 2017

5.2 Pre-Application Advice

Letter received 02.10.19 ref 190855/ PREAPP; confirming outcomes of discussion in meeting 13.08.19 and listing responses from consultees.

5.3 Building Users and Public Consultation

Design Proposals Public Consultation 12.09.19

The event was well attended including local residents, councillors, staff and pupils and neighbouring schools (Maiden Erlegh and University Technology College). Feedback was generally positive with 4 written comments received. Issues raised included proximity of MUGA to boundary fence, potential for unauthorised roof access and concerns around parking provision, access for school buses and congestion. The latter issues on transport are addressed within the transport statement, unauthorised roof access is to be addressed at detail design stage e.g. anti-climb gutters etc. The MUGA is to be kept in the location shown on the development plans as moving this closer to the building would restrict future expansion of the College.

Other Consultations

- Meeting with Maiden Erlegh Secondary School – 25.01.19 and 16.09.19
- Meeting with University Technology College – 24.01.19

- **Councillor Consultations**

- RBC briefing to Councillors tbc.

- **Design Development Consultations Jan 19 – July 19**

- Phoenix College Senior Management team
- Hampshire County Council School Travel Plan Team
- Berkshire County Council Archaeology Team
- Hampshire County Council Access Team
- Reading Borough Council Ecology Team
- Hampshire County Council Fire and Rescue
- Hampshire County Council Fire Review Group
- Reading Borough Council Highways Department
- Hampshire County Council Technical Services Department
- Hampshire County Council Geotechnical Department

5.4 Archaeology

A Heritage Asset assessment report was commissioned and is included in **Appendix K**. It concludes that interest in archaeological remains has been identified as being negligible and negligible-low.

5.5 Ecology

An ecological appraisal report has been completed for this project and can be found in **Appendix C**. The report concludes that the existing site is of low ecological value. The project provides an opportunity to improve bio diversity; the proposed landscape plan E03700 L 7000 indicates planting layouts which will introduce native trees and shrubs and includes an orchard bordering the residential development off Regis Park Road. Whilst the orchard will provide a positive ecological impact, immersion in natural environments is also proven to be of significant educational benefit to SEMH pupils.

6 Construction Strategy

6.1 Project Phasing

The project is to be delivered in a single phase as the current building and site is unoccupied.

6.2 Temporary Accommodation

Phoenix College is to remain in its current accommodation on Christchurch Road for the duration of the build so temporary accommodation is not required as part of this project.

7 Transport

Please refer to transport statement in **APPENDIX E**

7.1 Highways and Emergency Access

Vehicle access and emergency access to the school playing fields will be provided through the contractors site compound. A gateman will be provided to manage and monitor construction traffic during school drop off and pick up times due to Maiden Erlegh pupils passing in-front of the site entrance.

7.2 Travel Plan

A school travel plan has been developed by the HCC School Travel Plan Team in consultation with the school and the highways department. Please refer to **APPENDIX F**

7.3 Entrance Widening

The project will include for widening of the main vehicular entrance splay with new gates and kerb layout to allow two way traffic at the entrance (currently single width).

8 Building Services

8.1 General

Gas, electric and mains water supplies are to be taken from the existing school and upgraded where necessary. Foul Drainage is to be connected to an existing sewer running across the playing field in the direction of Crescent Road. Surface water drainage will be removed via sewer as the ground has been found to be unsuitable for use of soakaways. **APPENDIX J** for more detail.

8.2 External Lighting

Emergency lighting will be designed to BS5266 to provide safe access and emergency escape routes during hours of darkness. . External lighting is to be limited to wall mounted bulkheads or canopy down-lights. This lighting will be carefully designed to prevent light pollution and nuisance to residential properties. All external light fittings will be fitted with a photocell and time clock to restrict hours of use.

9 Access Statement

Hampshire County Council Property Services have undertaken consultation with Hampshire County Council Technical Services Department and Access Team which have been incorporated in the design proposals to ensure that the proposals promote accessibility for all. The proposal includes:

- dedicated accessible parking spaces
- drop kerbs
- level access to main entrance and throughout ground floor.
- Accessible lift to first floor
- entrance and classroom doors with flush well drained thresholds
- appropriate and well designed signage and way finding
- accessible toilets
- appropriate colour contrast to aid the visually impaired.

Details of the accessibility strategy are contained in **APPENDIX B**.

10 Acoustic Statement

The design is deemed to meet compliance with Building Bulletin 93 (BB93) criteria and Building Regulations.

Appendix A – Architects Drawings

Drawings:

- 208HC02 Topographical and utility survey sheet 1
 - 208HC02 Topographical and utility survey sheet 2
 - 208HC02 Topographical and utility survey sheet 3
 - 208HC200 Existing Elevations
 - 208HC300 Existing Floor Plans
 - 208HC400 Existing Sections
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- E03700 A 1000 Existing Site Plan
 - E03700 A 1500 Proposed Overall Site Plan
 - E03700 A 1600 Perspectives
 - E03700 A 2000 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 - E03700 A 2001 Proposed First Floor Plan
 - E03700 A 2004 Proposed Roof Plan Sheet 1
 - E03700 A 2004 Proposed Roof Plan Sheet 2
 - E03700 A 3004 Existing and Proposed Elevations
 - E03700 A 3102 Existing and Proposed Sections
 - E03700-L-7000 P3 Proposed Main Site Area General Arrangement
 - E03700-L-7002 P1 Proposed Car Park Layout Strategy
 - E03700-L-7005 P1 Proposed Artificial Turf Pitch Detail Area
 - E03700-L-7102 P3 Existing Sports Pitch Layout
 - E03700-L-7103 P1 Proposed Sports Pitch Layout

Appendix B – Design & Access Statement

Appendix C – Ecology Report

Appendix D – Sustainability Statement (to follow as addendum)

Appendix E – Transport Statement

Appendix F – School Travel Plan

Appendix G – Soil Report

Appendix H – Acoustic Report

Appendix J – Drainage Strategy

Appendix K – Archaeology Desk Top Survey